

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

PINTADO PETREL DAPTION CAPENSE IN KENYA The Pintado Petrel *Daption capense* has occurred as far north on the east coast of Africa as Mocambique town (15°00'S, 40°44'E), Moçambique (Saccarao 1951); there is also a record from further south in Moçambique, at Beira (Long 1964). Around Mauritius it is "rare but regularly recorded vagrant" (Temple 1976). It has also strayed north of the equator in the Indian Ocean where it has been acceptably recorded once (no date given) in the Gulf of Manaar between India and Sri Lanka (Hume 1870). This present note reports more fully a sighting of a single Pintado Petrel in Kenyan coastal waters (Sinclair 1979).

At 05:00 East African Time on 26 September 1974 the *MV Asia*, on which I was travelling, hove to 10 km off Mombasa, Kenya (4°04'S) to await permission to enter Mombasa Harbour. Garbage had been thrown overboard from the galley which attracted about 30 Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichii* and one Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*. These were joined at 08:15 by one Pintado Petrel which flew around the ship several times before alighting on the water near the stern. The bird stayed with the ship for some 10 min before flying out to sea. The black and white checkered back, dark head and two white patches on each wing were clearly seen - characters which make this petrel unmistakable. A small dark brown patch was visible on the white belly which might have been an oil smear. The general condition of the bird was good and it appeared to be strong and healthy.

This sight record seems to be the first for Kenya and for East Africa.

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WHITE-EYED POCHARDS AYTHYA NYROCA IN CENTRAL KENYA DURING EARLY 1981

The White-eyed Pochard *Aythya nyroca* winters commonly in the Lower Nile basin, and to a lesser extent within the West African savannah belt (Moreau 1972, Cramp & Simmons 1977). It is regular in small numbers south to Ethiopia (Moreau 1972, Ash 1980), but there are few records from East Africa. Backhurst et al. (1973) give six records from the Kenya highlands, and there is a single old record from northwestern Uganda (Jackson 1938). Despite increased observation and interest in wintering Palaearctic duck in recent years, we know of only four further records during the 1970s, a bird shot at Ol Bolossat during the season 1972/73 (Davey & Harrison 1976), one in March and one in April 1973 on Lake Turkana (Hopson & Hopson 1975), and one seen at Lake Paradise, Marsabit, on 22 April 1974 (Harper & Harper 1974). A series of records of the

species from Central Kenya early in 1981 is therefore noteworthy. Birds were recorded as follows:

Dandora Oxidation Ponds, Nairobi: 4 (1 ad m.) 1 Jan (DJP)
 2 (1 ad m.) 2 Jan (BSM, A.D. Lewis)
 1 (ad m.) 3, 4 Jan (DJP, D.A. Turner,
 D.E.G. Backhurst)

Thika Oxidation Ponds: 1 f./juv 3 Jan (BSM)
 1 ad m. 4 Feb (DJP, A.D. Lewis)

Lake Naivasha: 2 (1 ad m.) 1 Mar (BSM)

The White-eyed Pochard is known to fluctuate markedly in wintering numbers in West Africa. Thus, it is apparently absent from Nigeria in some years, yet a single flock at Kano numbered 1500 during 1963/64 (Elgood, Sharland & Ward 1966). The above Kenya records probably reflect a genuine small influx during 1980/81. It is quite possible, however, that the species has been overlooked amongst flocks of Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*. Features which proved useful in separating the 1981 birds from Southern Pochards are shown in Fig. 1 and discussed below.

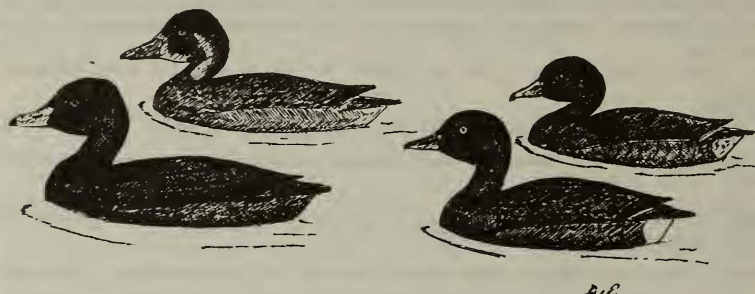


Fig. 1. Left, Southern Pochard: female (upper), male (lower). Right, White-eyed Pochard: female or juvenile (upper), male (lower)

At a distance, or in awkward light, adult male *A. nyroca* often appeared as dark as *N. erythrophthalma*, but were readily picked out by their pure white undertail coverts, smaller size and higher carriage in the water. At close range, the rich mahogany head and neck, reddish medium brown back and wings, and white eye were also distinctive. The flanks were dark brown; the white belly was not visible in swimming birds. As compared to *N. erythrophthalma*, the neck was typically held straighter, and the head was more rounded, with a steeper forehead and a narrower tipped bill with a more pronounced hook.

Despite the size and 'jizz' characters outlined above, female/juvenile *A. nyroca* were usually difficult to pick out from flocks of swimming *N. erythrophthalma*. They were duller brown than males, and the flanks contrasted more with the back, being barred and generally paler and more yellowish. The eye was pale, but not strikingly white. Female/juvenile *A. nyroca* of course lacked the white head markings of a female *N. erythrophthalma*. They had 'dirty' white undertails, but in some birds this was partly obscured by brownish blotching, and it should be noted that female *N. erythrophthalma* can appear pale under

the tail in some lights.

In flight, *A. nyroca* were relatively easily picked out by their smaller size and their broader, more curved white wing-bar. The distinctive, curved wing-bar is a feature which would distinguish White-eyed Pochard from Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* as well as from *N. erythrophthalma*. The white belly was not at all easy to see in flight.

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LONG-TAILED SKUAS *STERCORARIUS LONGICAUDUS* AT THE KENYA COAST During an afternoon seawatch from Ras Ngomeni, 25 km north of Malindi, on 19 October 1980, two Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* were observed flying south over the sea at 15:30 and 15:45 respectively. The first bird was observed at ranges of 100-150 m, whilst the second was very much closer, at ranges down to c. 30 m. Light conditions were excellent, with the sun behind the observer, and both birds were seen well with 10 x 40 binoculars.

Body size was larger than that of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* seen in the same field of view, and judged to be that of Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. Unmistakable 'jizz', with very pointed wings, slight build, and extremely long projecting central tail feathers (judged to be at least one third body length in the nearer bird).

Both birds were in adult plumage with clear-cut blackish cap, medium dark grey-brown back and upperwing coverts, and rather darker flight feathers and tail. Underwing and undertail dark, with slight off-white bases to the primaries; rest of underparts otherwise white, with no breast band. Bill dark. A pale orange-buff wash to the nape was seen on the nearer bird.

Flight of both birds was buoyant and tern-like, with graceful wingbeats. Further bird flying some 5 m above the waves, nearer bird up to 10 m above the waves. Both seen to make sorties towards nearby terns.

The skuas were observed during a period of quite heavy southward tern passage (about 800 per hour, mostly Roseates), in wind conditions NE force 3-4. Other seabirds of note recorded the same day were a Common Noddy *Anous stolidus* flying south at 16:55 during the same seawatch, and three large dark brown shearwaters, thought to have been Wedge-tailed *Puffinus pacificus*, seen from a boat 3 km offshore earlier in the day.

There is only one previous record of this species for East Africa, also an adult at Lake Turkana, 25-26 August 1961 (Britton 1980).

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